

DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION

14219 RIVER ROAD
P.O. BOX 530
WALNUT GROVE, CA 95690
PHONE: (916) 776-2290
FAX: (916) 776-2293



August 11, 1995

To: Delta Protection Commission

From: Margit Aramburu, Executive Director

Subject: Notes on Meeting with Coast Guard Regarding Control of
Vessels on Unusually High Waters
(For Commission Consideration and Possible Action)

Background.

At the Commission meeting of April, 1995, the Commission discussed the issue of unusually high waters in some Delta waterways during the traditional "boating season". This combination could result in extraordinary wear and tear on some Delta levees due to creation of wave wash on the uppermost part of some levees.

The Commission directed staff to pursue this matter with the Coast Guard and the Corps of Engineers, focusing on rare and unusual circumstances.

Staff mailed a letter to both the Coast Guard and the Corps on May 25, 1995 requesting meetings to discuss these issues (see attached copy of letter).

Meeting with Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard responded affirmatively and asked that the Department of Boating and Waterways (DBAW) be included in the meeting. The meeting was held on Friday, June 23, 1995 on Coast Guard Island in Alameda with Lieutenant Anthony D. Morris and Lieutenant Commander Sharon Richey of the Coast Guard and David Johnson of DBAW.

At the meeting the following matters were addressed:

The Coast Guard prefers to address commercial vessel traffic and leave recreational vessel traffic to local and/or State agencies.

Large commercial vessels are guided up river by Bar Pilots who are experts in navigation and safety, and these large vessels normally travel at low speeds due to the twists and turns of the river (8 to 10 knots).

The Coast Guard has the authority to regulate recreational vessel traffic in an emergency situation; the Corps would be called upon to help define an "emergency".

The Coast Guard can issue broadcast about emergency situations, but doesn't have staff and vessels to control or block access to certain waterways if an emergency existed, unless it is extremely limited, e.g. one waterway.

Cities and Counties have authority to control vessel speeds and access under State Code (Section 660).

Cities and Counties could define "emergency" and authorize the law enforcement agency to trigger enforcement of special speed zones or vessel restrictions and the local law enforcement agency could supervise enforcement (Note: At the request of the Sheriff, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors recently declared an emergency on the Mokelumne River and closed it until September, and the State Office of Emergency Services issued a safety advisory and the Sacramento County Parks Director recently closed the American River to boating after the spillgate at Folsom Dam broke).

If the Counties triggered special restrictions, the Coast Guard could broadcast those special restrictions on its marine radio as a courtesy to local government.

Summary.

In summary, the suggestions were:

1. Define the emergency situations that need special controls.
2. Contact local governments and ask them to adopt special controls to address these situations.
3. Coordinate with DBAW and Coast Guard to broadcast special advisories on marine radio; release onto the Internet; and release to television, radio, and press.

Enclosure

DELTA PROTECTION COMMISSION

14219 RIVER ROAD
P.O. BOX 530
WALNUT GROVE, CA 95690
PHONE: (916) 776-2290
FAX: (916) 776-2293



May 25, 1995

Captain Donald Montoro
U. S. Coast Guard
Marine Safety Office
San Francisco Bay, Building 14
Coast Guard Island
Alameda, CA 94501

and

Colonel John N. Reese
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

Gentlemen:

Subject: Concern About Extreme High Waters and the Possible Need
for Emergency Recreational Vessel Speed Limits

The Delta Protection Commission (DPC) is a state agency created under legislation passed in 1992, entitled the Delta Protection Act of 1992. The 19-member Commission is made up of elected local government officials, State agency directors or their designees, and five reclamation district representatives.

One area of grave concern to the all the DPC members is the long-term stability of the Delta levees. This year, in particular, the levees have been subjected to long periods of exposure to extreme forces of wind, tide, and high water flow.

The DPC asked staff to research possible means of protecting Delta levees from recreational vessel-derived wave wash in periods of extremely high water due to snowmelt, watershed precipitation, tides and any combination thereof would combine with sunny warm "boating" weather. Under these conditions, the Delta agricultural levees would be subject to additional stresses of wave wash over the tops of the levees, or wave wash above the top of the riprap.

Staff determined that under the Coast Guard's regulations, Section 162.205, the District Commander can issue emergency recreational vessel speed controls, and even temporarily close a waterway or any reach of it to vessel traffic. This could be done, however, only after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has inspected the situation and determined that there is an emergency situation which warrants imposition of emergency recreational vessel speed controls.

The DPC was apprised of these authorities at its monthly meeting of April 27, 1995, and asked staff to pursue discussions of these authorities with the Coast Guard and the Corps. On behalf of the DPC, I am therefore requesting a meeting with representative of the Coast Guard and the Corps to discuss these matters with the goal of clarifying what series of events would likely be construed as an emergency, what would be proper procedure to alert the Corps and the Coast Guard as to possible emergency situations, and how the procedure would be carried out.

Please let me know if such a meeting would be feasible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Margit Aramburu", followed by a horizontal line.

Margit Aramburu
Executive Director